Crew Foils Cuban, 20, in Try To Hijack Plane for Family

KEY WEST, Oct. 26 (UPI) A young Cuban, desperate to get to his family in Cuba but unable to find a boat, tried to hijack a National Airlines passenger plane in flight today but was overpowered by a copilot wielding a fire ax.

Authorities said Luis Medina Perez, 20, of Union City, N.J., pulled a luger-shaped pellet pistol on a stewardess and demanded to see the pilot during the Miami-to-Key West flight.

When Capt. K. I. Carlile came out of the cockpit, according to the FBI, Perez told him:

"Take this plane to Havana because I want to be with my family. I have noting to live for."

Carlile then convinced Perez to come into the cabin, where he and copilot D. S. McDaniel, armed with a fire ax, disarmed the Cuban.

Perez was taken into custody at plane-side when the airliner, carrying 27 persons, landed at Key West.

It wasn't clear immediately whether Perez wanted to rejoin his family in Cuba, or to attempt to bring them to this country.

Meanwhile, new arrivals from Cuba today pushed the total number of refugees in the current surge to more than 1500. Two hundred more boatloads reportedly are waiting to sail from the island.

[In Washington, Antonio Micocci, staff adviser of the Cuban Refugee Program of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, said the influx of refugees into the United States is not limiting job opportunities for Americans.

[He said the government had helped about 2600 of the first 93,000 Cuban refugees to settle in Washington, Virginia and Maryland. Most of the refugees are highly skilled people, Micocci said. "They're not competing; there is work for them.]